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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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FOR EUR/SE, INL/C, INL/AAE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: GR TU PGOV PREL SNAR
SUBJECT: MAJOR DRUG BUST SHOWCASES U.S.-GREEK COOPERATION

REF: ATHENS 01231

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On May 15, 2006, Hellenic authorities
arrested four alleged leaders of the international
Stathopoulos drug trafficking organization. Greek police
also seized approximately 100,000 MDMA (commonly known as
ecstasy) tablets, roughly 1,040,000 euros (USD 1,333,000) in
drug-related proceeds, and two vehicles. The arrests are
attributed to a successful Athens DEA Country Officer
undercover infiltration operation that began in March 2005
and showcase strong U.S.-Greek cooperation in combating drug
trafficking, an MPP goal. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The Andreas Stathopoulos drug trafficking
organization (DTO) is responsible for distributing hundreds
of kilograms of cocaine, multi-million tablet quantities of
MDMA/ecstasy and multi-ton quantities of ephedrine throughout
Europe and Australia. Assisting Greek officials, Athens DEA
Country Officer (CO) recruited and developed a confid ential
source with intimate knowledge of the Andreas Stathopoulos
DTO in March 2005, and by July 2005 Athens authorities were
able to infiltrate the organization.

¶3. (SBU) Undercover agents met with Stathopoulos several
times over the next year throughout Greece to negotiate terms
for Stathopoulos to supply undercover agents with
multi-kilogram quantities of cocaine and multi-thousand
MDMA/ecstasy tablets in exchange for multi-ton quantities of
ephedrine. Final agreement involved an exchange of 400,000
MDMA/ecstasy tablets for one ton of ephedrine, with
Stathopoulos requesting the undercover agents sell an
additional 100,000 MDMA/ecstasy tablets in the U.S. on
Stathopoulos' behalf. It was agreed that future transactions
would be contingent upon the success of this exchange
(reftel). Hellenic Authorities arrested Stathopoulos, along
with three other leaders of the DTO, Konstantinos Skouras,
Dimitris Samsonidis, and Australian national Leigh William
Dalton. The arrests were made without incident during the
"exchange" meeting in Agia Marina, Greece on May 15, 2006.

¶4. (SBU) A parallel financial investigation focusing on the
Stathopoulos DTO's drug-related assets identified two bank
accounts held by Skouras and Samsonidis, with a combined
total of 920,000 euro (USD 1,180,000). These accounts were
frozen and are subject to seizure pending the outcome of the
trial. A search or Skouras' and Samsonidis' residence led to
the seizure of a loaded automatic weapon and two cars.
Dalton's residence contained approximately 920,000 euro (USD

1,180,000) in bank drafts (the DTO's financial instrument for laundering drug-related proceeds). From May 2004-May 2005, the Stathopoulos DTO purchased in excess of 282 bank drafts totaling 1,300,000 euros (approximately USD 1,666,000). Warrants were obtained prior to all searches and Hellenic authorities will seize accounts pursuant to Hellenic Laws

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Combating international trafficking in narcotics by effectively identifying, disrupting, and eliminating drug smuggling is an MPP performance objective. This challenging year-long investigation by Greek law enforcement agencies clearly contributed to this MPP performance objective. Moreover, the case involved active collaboration and information sharing between Greek authorities and the Athens Drug Enforcement Administration office, and demonstrates strengthening of Greek law enforcement institutions, an MPP strategic objective. This successful case is a testament to Greek authorities' commitment to cooperating with U.S. DEA authorities to disrupt criminal organizations.
Countryman